

One of the most important duties of any U.S. Senator is the duty of advice and consent to the President's judicial appointments. I have worked hard throughout my career to ensure that the Senate provides the Federal courts with a steady supply of judges to enforce our Federal laws.

But, after serving on the Judiciary Committee for the last 20 years, and after serving as U.S. Senator from Delaware for the last 25 years, this is my first opportunity to recommend a Federal district court judge for Delaware.

I took this responsibility very seriously. And I have no doubt that Greg Sleet is the most qualified and experienced person for this position.

This is the second time President Clinton has put Greg's name through the rigors of Senate confirmation. But this is no surprise—he enjoys a reputation for impeccable integrity in the Delaware legal community.

In 1993, when I recommended Greg as U.S. attorney for Delaware, President Clinton was wise to follow my advice—he could not have nominated a more qualified, well-rounded, experienced Delawarean.

Greg was confirmed unanimously and flawlessly, and for the past 4 years has exceeded even my highest expectations.

And it is not only his distinguished service for Delaware, but also the breadth of Greg's experience that has impressed Delawareans, and convinced me that he will make a distinguished Federal judge.

Greg is a graduate of Rutgers University School of Law and completed his undergraduate work at Hampton University in Virginia.

He began his legal career in 1976 by serving for 7 years as a Philadelphia public defender—arguing before juries and representing indigent defendants at all stages of the criminal process—from pre-trial through the appellate courts.

He then gained experience in civil litigation, civil rights, estates, and criminal defense as an associate in private firms—most recently as a sole practitioner for his own firm. I know how tough—and rewarding—running your own firm can be.

In 1990, Greg began his service as deputy attorney general for the State of Delaware, where he gained experience prosecuting a variety of criminal cases at the State level.

He has practiced corporate and commercial law as well—working as an attorney in the legal department for Hercules Inc., where he helped manage corporate operations and litigation, and provided advice on acquisitions and antitrust matters.

Since Greg became U.S. attorney, he has demonstrated strong leadership as my State's chief Federal law enforcement officer—

He has developed a solid reputation by prosecuting many significant criminal cases, including numerous Federal drug and gun cases.

He has prosecuted hate crimes and fraud cases more aggressively than ever before.

And, in addition to his accomplishments in the criminal court at the Federal level, he has made it a priority to strengthen the civil division in Delaware's U.S. attorney's office.

Mr. President, I will not take up any more time—other than to repeat my “bottom line” from Greg's Judiciary Committee hearing:

Greg Sleet's record speaks for itself—the Federal bench needs judges like him. His background makes him exceptionally qualified to service on the Federal bench, and his record shows that he is tough—as we need our Federal judges to be—with the practical abilities and experience to do the job.

I am deeply proud to be associated with Greg's service as Delaware's U.S. attorney, and look forward to his service as a U.S. district court judge.

I commend my colleagues for taking the time to review Greg's record and thank them for their support for the candidacy of this fine nominee.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEFENDING THE FALSE CLAIMS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on Friday, a new audit report was released by the Health Care Financing Administration. It is the Chief Financial Officer's report. It shows that a staggering \$20 billion of tax dollars were improperly paid through Medicare last year. That is 20 billion reasons to defend the False Claims Act and oppose the bill percolating in the House that's being pushed by the American Hospital Association, and sponsored by Congressman BILL MCCOLLUM—H.R. 3523.

The audit is only the latest reminder of why the False Claims Act is the law of the land. Whether it is the derivation of the law signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, or the amendments that I sponsored, which passed in 1986, the reason the law exists is to protect the public's vital interests.

In the case of health care, those vital interests are clear. The False Claims Act helps maintain the integrity of Medicare so that senior citizens won't have to fear the possibility that the program won't be there for them in the future. It helps maintain the standards we want for our seniors with respect to the quality of health care. The False Claims Act is beginning to be used successfully by U.S. Attorneys to improve the quality of care in the health care industry, such as nursing home care.

Finally, the False Claims Act is the final yet most effective line of defense

to protect the taxpayers' hard-earned money. Since my amendments in 1986, the Act has been used to return more than \$4 billion, fraudulently taken, back to the taxpayers. Nearly \$2 billion of that is from the health care industry. And somewhere between \$150 and \$300 billion-worth of potential fraud has been deterred.

There is a critical and obvious need for the False Claims Act to safeguard the public interest. The Act is also highly successful. It has built up a track record for accomplishing exactly what it was designed to do—to promote integrity in taxpayer-funded programs.

Suddenly, integrity in such programs is under a fierce attack. The attack is the McCollum bill, which would gut the False Claims Act. What's wrong with this picture?

The McCollum bill is a misguided missile in the war against fraud. If it passes, perpetrators of fraud will be celebrating in the streets. It is ill-founded, and would send the wrong message both to the public and to those who would commit fraud.

The bill is the product of the American Hospital Association. The AHA came to me earlier this year and reported what they claim are examples of the Justice Department going after hospitals with heavy-handed tactics, and using the False Claims Act to prosecute innocent mistakes. I also visited with the Iowa Hospital Association, from my home State.

After listening to their concerns, it seemed to me that the examples the AHA provided spoke more to problems in the implementation of the law, rather than to problems with the law itself. I agreed to approach the Justice Department and help begin a dialogue between DOJ, the AHA, and myself and other members of Congress. The goal was to examine the evidence and see where the problems were occurring and why. And then to fix any real problems.

After much examination and discussion, I and others determined that the AHA had some legitimate concerns involving the way some U.S. Attorneys were communicating with some hospitals around the country.

To its credit, the Justice Department has reevaluated its process and made changes. It has changed its approach, and has taken steps to ensure higher standards prior to any investigation for fraud. It is not often that the Justice Department willingly reexamines its process, admits changes are needed, and then makes them. Because it did so in this case, I believe that the Justice Department should be commended for its responsiveness.

As a case in point, let me refer to a letter I received this month from the president of a medical center in Iowa. Next year, he will be in the leadership of the Iowa Hospital Association. He is one of those who had expressed concerns to me months ago about how the Justice Department was implementing